Plain Speaking To Muslims

by

Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Introduction

We have great pleasure in presenting herewith the English version of an article published in an Urdu weekly 'Nida-e-Millat' Lucknow, by the eminent thinker, orator and author, Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi.

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MAULANA SYED ABUL HASAN ALI NADWI

A PROFILE

Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was born in 1914 in a family which had a long tradition of selfless service to the nation and the country. He had his early eduction at home. Then he joined the Darul Uloom Nadwat-ul-Ulama and qualified from there with distinction. He specialised in 'Hadees' (traditions of Prophet Muhammad) under the tutorship of Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani and 'Tafseer' (exegesis) under Maulana Ahmad Ali of Lahore. He is now Rector (Nazim) of Darul Uloom Nadwat-ul-Ulama.

He has written over eighty books on subjects related to Islamic faith, literature and history in Arabic and Urdu, a number of which have been translated into English, French, Turkish, Indonesian, Persian, Fillipino and other languages.

He started a movement by the name of 'Payam-e-Insaniyat' in 1974 and travelled throughout the length and breadth of the country for it. The main purpose of the movement is to create a feeling of love, affection and brotherhood among different sections of the population and to root out the evils of corruption, favouritism, black-marketing etc. from Indian society.

He is widely travelled and he has delivered lectures in world famous universities like those of Oxford, Harvard, Berlin etc.

He is Chairman of the Islamic Centre, Oxford University, Oxford (U. K.), Chairman, World Forum of Islamic Literature (which has membership from all over the Muslim world), Chairman, Foundation for Studies and Research, Luxembourg Member, Academy of Arts and Letters, Damascus (Syria). Member, National Foundation for Translation, Research and Studies, Carthage (Tunisia), Member, Academy of Research in Islamic Civilisation, Amman (Jordan), Member, Federation of Islamic Universities, Rabat (Morocco), Member, Advisory Committee, University of Madina, Founder-Member, Muslim World League, Makkah (Saudi Arabia), President, Shibli Academy, Azamgarh (U. P.), President, All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, President, Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow. He was granted Shah Faisal Award in 1980, for his outstanding contribution to Islamic Studies.

Plain Speaking to Muslims

Dear Brothers,

I would like to do some 'plain speaking' without mincing matters because the distressing and sorrowful plight of the 'millat' all over the world warrants soul-searching by all thinking and responsible members of this vast community at the present juncture. It is being done in the interest and for the well-being of all of us in all sincerity and sympathy from the depth of my heart and I hope it will be received in the same spirit.

> "Rakhiyo Ghalib mujhe is talkh nawai men mu'af,
> Aaj kuchh dard mere dil men siwa hota hai."
> (Ghalib excuse me for speaking so bitterly,
> For today I feel greater pain in my heart).
>
> Ghalib

The secret of safety, security and survival of the 'ummat' lies in looking for the real causes of the present distressful conditions and finding a way out of this unprecedented predicament. We are placed in a very unenviable position and there is no way out except to revert to Islam.

> "————— and who had felt that the earth, spacious as it was, had become too strait for them and their very lives had become a burden unto them, and who had thought that there was no refuge from Allah except in Himself."
>
> Surah at Tauba : 118

It is necessary as patriotic and conscientious citizens to draw the attention of the powers-that-be and important institutions of national standing to their errors of omission and commission and there is no need to be afraid of being misunderstood over it.

An Honest General Survey :

It is also our religious duty to speak the truth and not be guided by opportunism in doing so. The "khair-e-ummat" cannot and should not shirk its responsibility in this regard even if its voice is not heard. It is necessary for the elite in the 'ummat' to make a thorough study of the lurking dangers in the light of the 'Sermon on Mount Safa' by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and speak plainly about the righteous deeds and moral obligations on which the Divine Law of Rise and Fall of Nations is based : Recall the time when the Makkan elite had assembled at the foot of Mount Safa in response to the call by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) who was known among them as "truthful" and "trustworthy." They thought that they would be told about a possible enemy attack or some such catastrophe. But they were told that there is no danger from outside, but it is from 'within' which is to overtake them on account of their ungodly and erroneous ways of life.

The guidance offered by the glorious Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) is enough for the 'ummat' as a perfect and infalliable guide for all times and under all conditions however worse they be. A few guide-lines are being spelled out in this short discourse for consideration of the elite in the 'millat'. It is necessary for them to devote immediate and urgent attention to the suggestions being offered here to attract Divine Mercy and bring about a wind of change in the prevailing miserable conditions.

The Difference Between Monotheism and Polytheism :

It is abundantly clear from the study of the glorious Qur'an that if a community blessed with a divine book and avowing belief in Allah; is involved in polytheism of any kind, instead of following the guidance offered therein, it is deprived of the Divine Help, falls in disfavour and ultimately disgraced.

> "The displeasure of their Lord will surely rest on those who had worshipped the calf and humiliation will be their share in their present life, for, so do We requite those who give rise to false notions."
>
> Surah al-A'araf : 152

> "We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve because they ascribe unto Allah partners for which no warrant hath been revealed."
>
> Surah al-i-Imran : 15

On the other hand if it follows Divine Ordinances in letter and spirit; to the best of its capacity, there is a definite promise of safety, peace and glory in the world as evident from the following verse of the glorious Qur'an.

> "Allah hath held out the promise that those who believe and do what is right that He will accord to them the privilege of ruling in the land, even as He had accorded to those who had gone before them, and that He will let the way of life (din) chosen for them prevail and that He will replace their state of fear by one of security (the privilege of being conditioned by the Divine Command : They shall have to serve Me alone, without setting up any peers to Me. And whoso prove ungrateful after this, shall be regarded as wicked."
>
> Surah an Nur : 54

The Lives of the Companions of the Prophet :

The glorious Qur'an vouchsafes for the companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) when they practised the principles laid down therein, that :

> And remember the time when you were but few (at Makkah) and held of little account in the land and in dread of those who would forcibly expel you. It was then that He found for you a place of refuge (Madina) and strengthened you with His help and provided you with the good things of life that haply you might give thanks."
>
> Surah al-Anfal : 26

A Few Polytheistic Beliefs and Practices :

The disclosure may, however, be unpleasant for some people, but it is a fact that some polytheistic beliefs and practices have penetrated in a section of the 'ummat'. It requires a little understanding of the glorious Qur'an and moral courage to realise it. The glorious Qur'an has denounced polytheism in unambiguous terms as an unforgivable sin.

> "Surely Allah forgives not the setting up of peers for Him; for anything less than this, He forgives whomsoever He pleases."
>
> Surah an-Nisa : 48

If anybody disbelieves or doubts the veracity of the above statement, he would do well to visit any popular shrine or attend an "Urs" and overhear the conversation of the frequent visitors to these places about the dogmatic notions which they, including a few bigwigs, have about these sages

and "aulia". Except for the few attributes (sifat) like creation of the universe and the like, they have ascribed many divine attributes to these "aulia" including invocation (dua) from and prostration (sajda) before their graves though these forms of submission are exclusively meant for Allah. If someone, who has a little knowledge of the principles of Islam, visits any locality inhabited by such Muslims, it is feared, he may cry out :

> "And many of them believe not in Allah
> except by joining others (with Him)."

Surah Yusuf : 106

We cannot, therefore, expect anything substantial out of the plausible and specious means adopted at the instance of the so called leaders for safety, security and welfare of the "ummat" when the glorious Qur'an declares :

> "Allah hath held out the promise that those
> who believe and do what is right."

Surah an Nur : 55

The preachers, speakers and scholars who are endowed with the understanding of the spirit of Islam connot escape their responsibility in this respect and they are likely to be questioned on the Day of Judgement.

The ill-effects of Immorality and Misdeeds :

The way the writ of Allah runs in the universe since creation, the properties of matter are an established and known fact - water, fire, herbs, poisons etc. have their specific properties. The way discipline, diligence and such other tried and tested methods have proved their worth for

success in the world in accordance with the Will of Allah, in the same way morality and righteous deeds and immorality and misdeeds do effect the lives of individuals and communities. The glorious Qur'an has described the ill-effects and dire consequences of misdeeds on the lives of individuals and communities in details. It is enough to look at the deplorable conditions and end of the tribes of Prophets Nuh, Hud, Salih, and Lut (peace be on them all) wherein their peculiar characteristic traits and deeds (rather misdeeds) have been mentioned along with the Divine chastisement which was wreaked on those tribes.

"O my people ! Let not the schism with me cause you to sin so that there befall you that which befell the folk of Noah and the folk of Hud, and the folk of Salih; and the folk of Lot are not far off from you."

Surah Hud : 89

Those who do not work according to the divine principles of Islam lead a miserable life. They are afflicted with distress, disrespect, diseases, abnormal deaths etc. The merciful Prophet (peace be on him) has also warned that when the "Ordering of good" and "forbidding of evil" is abandoned, the invocations are not answered. On the other hand if a climate of repentance (inabat) and recantation (tauba) is created, the Divine chastisement is withdrawn.

"......................When they (the folk of Jonah) believed We drew off from them the torment of disgrace in the life of the world and gave them comfort for a while."

Surah Yunus : 99

It is observed that a large number of Muslims are involved in dissimulation (nifaq) of deeds (a'amal) and morals (akhlaq), and a good number of the pseudo leaders in the dissimulation of faith. It has also been noticed that a large majority of our brethren is permanently negligent of the daily five obligatory prayers - the most important of the fundamental principles of Islam after "iman." It is absolutely necessary that along with other measures for the uplift of the "ummat" (in fact, before they are taken up), the members of the "ummat" should be called upon to strictly follow the tenets of Islam, i.e., Prayers, Zakat, Fasting and Hajj along with rectification (islah) of their conduct and morals without which nothing worthwhile can be achieved by us as a whole. We should, where necessary, put a little fright in the hearts of the errant members of the "ummat" of the chastisement that afflicts the wrong doers in this world and the next for negligence of these fundamentals, which constitute the pillars of Islam.

> "And obey Allah and His messenger, and dispute not one with another lest ye falter and your strength depart from you; but be steadfast! Lo! Allah is with the steadfast."
>
> Surah al - Anfal : 46

The Practice of Certain Rituals for Cheap Popularity :

The deeds which have their ill - effects in this world and the next and far - reaching consequences on the lives of individuals and communities are personal affairs, mutual dealings (mu'amlat), extravagance in certain rituals, spending lavishly for satisfaction of personal whims and fancies, etc. Because there can be no propriety for extravagance in religious ceremonies and social

functions. They are not in keeping with the spirit of Islam and such persons are liable to be questioned when lots of people do not have the means to meet the basic needs of life; when thousands of children cannot afford text books or school fees and cannot continue their studies; when such institutions, which form the backbone of the community, are struggling for survival and scores of plans, without which the meaningful existence of the community is inconceivable, are lagging behind or cannot prosper for want of necessary funds. It is unfortunate that prosperous persons and purse-proud upstarts spend lavishly on the marriages of their children and other ceremonies. The system of dowry is another curse which has infiltrated in a section of the 'millat' at some places. It is sad that inspite of education, social and political changes these princely and wasteful expenses have not stopped. On the contrary, novel methods have been adopted and political ambitions have been linked with them.

Even today in most of our professional fraternities, business class and the urban elite, the observance of these customs and conventions is given to ostentation; even if some of them are a necessity and a religious duty but they should be observed with austerity. There are some people who are otherwise religious minded but they consider these ceremonies unrelated with religion. The glorious Qur'an admonishes such persons in the following verses :

i) "What thinkest thou (O Muhammad !) of him who hath chosen to worship his own desires."

Surah al - Furqan : 43

ii) ' But they say. We found our fathers following a certain way and we are simply guided by their foot-steps.

Surah az-Zukhruf : 22

We have to make radical changes in the ideals and concepts attached with these ceremonies. It is necessary to rise against such conventions, make it clear that these grandiose practices invite the wrath of Allah and bring about the decline and downfall of the community. The Beneficient and Merciful Allah and His equitable laws do not countenance this prodigality for illusory notions of recognition and "the bubble reputation" when the wealth thus wasted can be usefully utilised to provide means of subsistence for lacs of indigent members of the "millat" or utilised to meet the expenses of institutions of religious, educational and technical instruction which sorely need funds.

"And whenever We intend (in consequence of misdeeds, to let the law of life take its course) to destroy a city, We forewarn the affluent among its people but when they disregard the warning, the doom deserved overtakes them; and We let it come to absolute ruin."

Surah Bani Israil : 16

The most detestable practice which can invite the wrath or chastisement of Allah is the long list of demands made by the groom's side from the bride's as a condition of marriage. This practice has been given different names at different places. The dowry in accordance with one's status is not against "Shariat." It is, in fact, an estimable convention and a sign of good family ties. The Prophet (peace be on him) gave certain

house-hold articles in dowry to his daughter Fatima Zahra because Hazrat Ali did not have those articles of daily use. The companions of the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Muslims of all classes and in all ages have given dowry to their daughters. But the form has now changed. It is no more a gift, a token of family ties. It is given in some cases to make a name, or as a ritual, but in most of the cases under compulsion. The father of the bride, at times, raises a loan (may be at exorbitant interest), or disposes of his property to meet the demands of dowry. The importance attached to dowry in India is not the practice in other Muslim countries. It, therefore, appears to be indigenous custom. It has now assumed an alarming magnitude and made marriages difficult and a curse and such despicable acts are perpetrated for dowry that they are enough to invite the wrath of Beneficient and Merciful Allah as such practices have been the cause of destruction of kingdoms and obliteration of civilisations in the past

The Muslims who claim to follow the Prophet who was sent as 'Mercy for the worlds' (peace be on him) ought to have come forward and stopped this wicked practice as sincere and true followers of that Prophet (peace be on him) about whom the glorious Qur'an says.

> "But Allah would not punish them
> while thou wast with them ...."

Surah al-Anfal : 33

It is very sad that this evil has inflitrated in Muslim community also and some Muslims do not consider it against humanity and religion. If just one item in the long list of demands is not

provided the grooms (or in some cases the in-laws) do not allow the wedded wives to join them for years.

It is necessary that this evil be eradicated root and branch, else, I am afraid, the divine calamity may strike all of a sudden. Even otherwise the ill-effects of this practice which have affected the family and social life are not hidden from those who have a seeing eye. The holy prophet (peace be on him) is reported to have said :

Hazrat Huzaifa Yamani narrates that Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said, "By Allah in whose hands is my life, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. It is, otherwise, feared that Allah may send His chastisement ('azab) and you pray and it may not be answered."

(Tirmizi)

An Exemplary Event :

Those affluent members of the "ummat" who spend lavishly on banquets and illumination should keep the following exemplary event in mind. Hazrat Abdul Rehman bin 'Auf married after migration to Madina and Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) was not informed of this important event though his presence would have been auspicious (babarkat) and a matter of just pride for him. These days relations are invited from far off places-countries from where passports and visas are required. When the Prophet (peace be on him) came to know about the marriage, he asked him to give a marriage feast (walimah).

The time has now come that this tendency of pompous feasts and lighting should be curbed by the elite. They should openly express their disgust and displeasure at this wastage and

discourage this trend by total boycott of such persons and festivities.

These spend-thrifts should know that there can be no justification for this needless luxury.

They should be afraid of accountability on the Day of Judgement when they would be called upon to render account for each and every paisa and prove the legality of this wastefulness.

> "He it is who hath placed you viceroys of the earth and hath exalted some of you in rank above others, that He may try you by (the test of) that which He hath given you. Lo ! the Lord is swift in prosecution, and lo ! He is Forgiving, Merciful."
>
> Surah al-An'am : 165

Indifference to Social Obligations :

It is clear from the study of the glorious Qur'an that excessive interest and occupation in one's personal affairs and business or economic advancement to the neglect of collective needs of the "millat", propagation and defence of faith, etc. are like committing suicide. The "millat" which takes to this wrong course is doomed to failure.

> "And spend in the way of Allah and do not with your own hands work for your ruin and do good for Allah verily loves who do good."
>
> Surah al-Baqarah : 195

Hazrat Abu Ayyub Ansari-the host of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)-who knew the real significance of this verse rebuked his comrades-in-arm at the time of the siege of Constantinople

when they wrongly inferred from this verse that wilful exposure of oneself to undue risks in 'jihad' is like committing suicide. He explained that this verse had been revealed when 'Ansar' had thought to take time off and look after their personal affairs, business, agriculture etc., which were adversely affected on account of their pre-occupation in learning and propagating the teachings of Islam. The 'Ansar' were admonished that if they suspend their religious obligations to look after personal affairs, this diversion albeit temporary, would be like committing suicide. It was made clear to them in unequivocal terms that individual safety and security lies in the excellent state of preservation of the entire 'ummat' in the same way as freshness of leaves depends on their remaining joined with the trees. If the leaves are detached from the tree they are seared. The life, progress and advancement of individuals is bound with the 'ummat' and this law of life is inviolable.

> "Paiwasta reh shajar se ummaid-e-bahar rakh" (Keep joined with the tree and hope for the spring).

The individual members of the 'millat' cannot live with respect and remain secure on the unfounded notion of personal prestige and riches, social and economic status detached from the 'millat'. The history of the 'millat' provides evidence that whenever a community forming part of it behaved in this short-sighted manner it was ousted from its hearths and homes.

> "The likeness of those who choose other patrons than Allah is as the likeness of the spider when she taketh unto herself a house and lo! the frailest of all houses is the spider's house, if they but knew".
>
> Surah al-Ankabut : 41

The Need for Judicious Efforts :

The 'ummat' is at a cross road at the present time. It is, therefore, necessary that judicious and determined efforts are made for the survival of the entire 'ummat'. The situation demands vigorous implementation of certain well-thought out plans for our individual and collective existence as Muslims. It is necessary that they should be safe, respected and be in a position to play an effective and decisive role in the affairs of the society. They have also to retain their special characteristics, make themselves useful to others and a blessing for humanity at large.

They must rise to the occasion, move with times (without in any way giving up the fundamental and basic principles of Islam) and march in step or ahead of developing nations as our forebears did. If necessary they should provide guidance and save the society from impending dangers and moral collapse. It is incumbent on the 'millat' to have its own educational institutions, initiate constructive plans and programmes and make organised efforts in the right direction. They are as important as air and water for life. If these institutions function properly and continue to march forward then the survival of the 'ummat' would be assured, its future would be bright and its position firmly established in the society. The narrow-mindedness and prejudices of some people, laxity or partiality of those in power and endeavours on the part of some persons in and outside the 'millat' to disrupt its unity or retard its future progress and these frequent disturbances would not seriously effect the attaining of its destined goal.

> "If Allah is your helper none can overcome you, and if He withdraw His help from you, who is

there who can help you ? In Allah let believers put their faith."

Surah al-i-Imran : 160

The Poor Man's Lamp :

If a few members of the "millat" are busy feathering their own nests, the rich and the powerful are negligent of the needs and demands of the 'millat' and they are unabashedly luxurious in satisfying their whims and wishes when such institutions and programmes which are vital for the meaningful existence and regeneration of the 'millat' are in a morbid state, then these individuals, may be as rich as Korah, are exposed to catastrophic upheavals. They carry absolutely no weight in the sight of Allah. A slight turn of the wheel of fortune would dislodge them from their high but precarious position and when they come to their senses they would find themselves deprived of everything worthwhile and meet the fate of extravagant and defaultant people.

"———And even they (the People of the Book) on their part thought that their fortress will protect them against Allah. But Allah came upon them from whence they scarcely expected it and caused such upheaval in their hearts, that they let their houses be demolished by their own hands".

Surah Hashr : 2

Those scholars who have been endowed with some understanding of the immutable laws of Allah are apprehensive about the present conditions of the 'millat' as a whole.

The 'millat' inspite of the political changes and economic backwardness is still in a position to run its religious, educational and technical institutions and finance the plans and programmes meant for its all round progress. These institutions and plans need not suffer or lag behind for want or lack of funds. Because there are many plans without which the educational, economic and other problems of the 'millat' cannot be solved and there are a number of institutions in the absence of which it would not be fair to say :

> "Khas hai tarkib men qaum-e-Rasool-e-Hashmi"
> (Distinct is in composition the 'ummat' of Hashemite Prophet).
>
> Iqbal

There are many educational and similar other institutions which can save the Muslim youth from mental and cultural apostasy (which has overwhelmed the Muslim countries) and regenerate their faith (which has been dampened by Western education) in Islam and its bright future and provide antidote for the poison with which the Orientalists have perverted the minds of those youngmen who now monopolise leadership or hold the reins of government in Muslim countries. There are, again, many institutions which can bring about a reconciliation between the ever-changing life patterns and the eternal laws of Islam; which can infuse a new faith and confidence and provide guidance to our younger generation which has been misguided by Western ideologies. These institutions can undertake the work of re-orientation which had been achieved by the former scholars. There are many institutions which can translate the glorious Qur'an and present the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) in different national and international languages which

would help in providing a proper understanding of Islam to those persons who harbour misgivings about it on account of the false propaganda carried out against it. But alas ! all these plans and programmes remain a dream or exist just on paper and they cannot be implemented or expanded because the necessary funds are not forthcoming.

The Absence of English and Hindi Press :

It is difficult to find a parallel instance in history that a community whose numbers run in crores and which has lacs of rich and highly educated persons should suffer on account of doubts and suspicions created about it in the minds of others on the strength of distorted history and there are possibilities of fresh misunderstandings being created about it at all times. At a time when every incident, however, unimportant it may be, is utilised to paint the community in the blackest possible colours; when it is innocent and oppressed it is indicted as tyrant and blood-thirsty; when it is unable to exercise its birth-right to self protection, it is accused of oppression and armed raids; when its members are murdered, it is easy to denounce them as murderers; when the hostile press can make a mountain of a mole-hill; when fictitious stories are given the widest publicity; when all these things are going on for years on end, that community has no English and/or Hindi Daily Newspaper of its own to refute these false allegations, voice its genuine grievances and convey its tale of woes and miseries to the powers-that-be and the elitist circles and educate them on the truths about this much maligned community and religion.

What can we say about the common sense and intelligence of that community whose privileged few make a show of being happy and in easy circumstances on all occasions in and outside the country;

when a large majority of its members is oppressed and poor, backward and uneducated, unskilled and unemployed.

> "Khama angusht ba-dandan hai ise kiya likhiye,
> Natiqa sir bagariban hai ise kiya kahiye".
> (The pen is awe struck as what to write about it,
> The speech is dumb-founded as what to call it).
>
> Ghalib

Then that community has no right to complain about others. There is no use frowning at any event, however, shocking and objectionable it be. The frequent occurrence of riots has reached the stage that it should receive our immediate attention. It is not only the religious obligation to render all possible help to the helpless and homeless victims of the 'millat' but it is a moral and humanitarian duty also. It should not, however, take away all our time, energy and attention.

This State Of Affairs Is Intolerable :

We should not allow the present state of affairs to become a permanent feature of our existence. That community is very unfortunate and pitiable which is persecuted time and again and all its resources are frittered away in finding remedies to these inflictions.

This 'ummat' has not been raised to be continuously operated upon and to dissipate its energies all the time in attending to the gaping immedicable wounds. It is, therefore necessary to plug the loopholes through which these riots find their way into Muslim localities whether they be in or outside them.

There is an urgent need to imbibe Islamic teachings in their pristine form as expounded by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) and practised

by his companions which would pave the way for our unity, safety and welfare. We should take firm, positive and concrete steps in this direction and these should continue unabated till we feel sure of complete protection of the entire 'millat'. We should not leave any available stone unturned till we achieve our set goal.

> "And hold fast all of you together, the cable of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour with you, how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts by His grace, and (how) you were upon the brink of an abyss of fire, and He did save you from it".
>
> Surah al-i-Imran : 103

The recent woeful and tragic course of events all over the world demand that we sit up and take stock of the situation in a rational and candid manner like a living and conscientious community. The malaise is deep seated. We must revert to the glorious Qur'an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) because the root cause of our trials and tribulations is different as are their remedies.

> "Corruption doth appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done in order that they may return (from evil)".
>
> Surah ar-Rum : 41

Excessive Sentimental Speeches :

Of the weaknesses which have crept into the temperament of the 'millat' in recent times, specially after the Khilafat Movement (which of course, created

a political awakening amongst the Muslims), one is sentimental and passionate speeches by some of its leaders. There is no doubt that in order to brave national calamities, stiff opposition and to emerge triumphantly from the tight corners we find ourselves in, firm resolution and a spirit of adventure are necessary and helpful. We find evidence of it in the history of different nations. But wise and intelligent leaders use impassioned speeches with utmost caution or else these impetuous speeches lose their efficacy and the old story of 'crying wolf' is repeated.

It has become a fashion with some speakers to talk big and inundate the audience with a deluge of words.

It should, however, be borne in mind that words also have their own temper. It would be wrong for a speaker to use harsh words at a time when mild words should be used.

It is also not wise to use strong language and stir human passions when there is no intention or occasion to turn words into deeds. It is a sort of a deception with the audience. Those who have a sense of realism are very sensitive in this respect, and their leaders use proper words in proper places. The way extravagance in matters of money is contemptible in the same way volcanic words are undesirable specially when they have an effect on the future of the 'millat'. This lack of caution may sometimes lead into desperate situations where remedial measures may not be possible. It is, therefore, necessary to be more cautious in the use of words than in that of money (it affects mainly the individuals and families), and exercise moderation in appealing to the sentiments of the people.

It is now being observed that at such meetings which are held with the specific object of reforms in the 'millat' or presenting some problems or voice its grievances (before the powers-that-be), the speakers compete in inciting the emotions of the audience and try to demonstrate their excellence in oratory. The strong words which are employed in very special circumstances are freely used in such meetings. While a speaker finishes his speech with a warning; "We will erect a minaret of skulls", the other boasts, 'We will cause a sea of blood to flow etc. etc.'. When no results are obtained after these inflamed speeches the words lose their effectiveness and the people their capacity to carry anything into effect.

It is necessary to be more careful where different sects and communities are living. It is sometimes felt that Muslims are born orators and every member of this community can speak with vigour. As against this, we find, the nations which have won many political battles and the ruling power had to yield to them even though they used rhetoric and jugglery of words to a lesser degree. They are still solving bigger problems with moderate and balanced speeches. But in view of the inflamed speeches the taste of the 'millat' has become like that of a person who relishes strong flavoured spices and demands more and more of them.

For the nations which have to live a respectable life the speech which may tire out the people easily, is neither needed nor it is wise. It is not also in accord with the temperament of the community which has been entrusted with the responsibility of preaching and reformation.

Lack of Patience :

The natural and psychological result of these inflamed speeches is that the 'millat' has lost its capacity for long and hard struggle, especially when the chances of quick results are not bright; when at times staking ones life or whole fortune for any cause appears easier but persistent efforts and ability to bear hardship for a considerable time seem to be against the nature of our people.

This impatience on a large scale in the 'millat' causes anxiety because silent, continuous and patient struggles are necessary to create a place of honour for it, to find solutions to its multiple problems and preserve its unique personality, as couriers of a divine message, rather than as demagogues.

It is an established fact that the minority community has to exert itself two-fold or even four-fold to live with respect compared to what the majority community does. The Jews gave proof of their capacity to work hard and acquired such influence in the national affiars of the United States and some European countries which is quite out of proportion to their small population. But the 'millat' in India far from exerting itself two-fold or four-fold is not prepared even to work as hard as the majority community does with the result that it lags behind in competitive examinations and is deprived of executive posts. If this trend continues for some time more, it is feared, that the Muslims may fall back and join the rank of backward classes or even linger behind them.

This temperament which is to some extent the result of inflamed speeches and the desire to get quick results out of their scanty efforts, has become the cause of a severe trial for the 'millat' with its

manifold and complicated problems. It has become difficult for them to run any organisation or persevere in their endeavours in any issue for long. The institutions which the 'millat' founded a century or half a century back are almost in the same position as at the time of their founding or languish in a torpid state on account of indifference by Muslims. But the educational institutions which the majority community or other minority communities started have progressed far ahead during the same period. There is no comparison in the standard of education, number and size of buildings and over-all working conditions. This difference in mental attitudes and temperament is a result of the style of leadership and impassioned speeches which have become a characteristic trait and a matter of prestige with the Muslims.

Lack of Co-operation and Confidence :

The spirit of mutual co-operation and confidence is lacking in joint ventures with the result that several larger Muslim institutions, whether educational or otherwise, are in a torpid condition. They are faced with all sorts of problems and it appears that they may close down at any time. The major reason for this state of affairs is lack of faith in the sincerity, honesty and managing capacity of the people who are responsible for running these institutions. Their decisions and actions are regarded with suspicion. There is always pressure on them to keep the members (as well as non-members) satisfied, sacrifice the interests of the institution over the wishes of the patrons, political leaders and influential persons and produce results.

If at any time a petty wish (be it irregular) of any person who matters is not complied with, he would not hesitate to destroy the institution and deprive the 'millat' of a useful and valuable national

asset. The other symptom of decline is the lack of patience and spirit of sacrifice. If by chance any institution obtains the services of a sincere worker who cannot please the political leaders, guardians of students and members of different committees and embarks on a few constructive measures to reform the institution, then all his past achievements, good qualities, sincerity and honesty are forgotten and a campaign of vilification mounted against him.

The masses have double standards : one for themselves and the other for national leaders and public workers. They adopt a policy of 'forget and forgive' for themselves and their ilk but demand austerity, abstinence and simplicity of Syedna Umar bin Abdul Aziz, if not of Hazrat Umar Farooq from public workers. This kind of thinking has created uncertain conditions for our institutions and those sincere persons who can serve the people with honesty think a hundred times before accepting any responsibility when they look to the unenviable position of other social workers.

The matter is not confined only to lack of confidence and undue criticism, it has gone to the extent of casting aspersions, making insinuations and even character assassination. If some one hears something unsavoury about a social worker or a political leader he puts together disjointed events, concocts a story and makes a mountain of a mole hill. The main purpose behind this fib of imagination and slander campaign is to gain some political advantage or news scoop. This trend started from the times of 'Khilafat Movement' when the intrepid and devoted leaders staked and sacrificed their lives for the 'millat' and it has now extended to regional leaders, social workers and theologians (ulama) also.

But the attitude of the majority community towards their leaders is different. They are, by and large, broad-minded and prepared to wait for results. The outcome of this confidence in their leaders is that they get sufficient time to implement their plans and carry them to successful conclusion. Their followers acknowledge it with an open heart and feel grateful for their achievements. This is the general practice in regard to the founders of universities and ashrams, reformers and communalist revivalist movements.

The Need to Acquaint Others with Islam :

An evidence of the short-sightedness of the Muslims is that they did not try to acquaint their neighbours (the majority of which has not only religious differences with them but is suspicious of them on historical and political grounds) with the principles of Islam, the pious lives of their illustrious religious leaders and renowned historical figures. They have also not tried to explain the role they played after coming to India, the various gifts they conferred on the Indian society, and the contribution they can still make in internal and external affairs of the country. They have again, not tried to show that inspite of certain weaknesses they possess certain inherent qualities through which the Indian society can be saved from all round degeneration towards which it is fast moving. The commonman has not experienced their superior morals and excellent character. The non-Muslims have come across them as rivals in the political field and elections or in market places, offices etc. and they did not find any distinguishing signs among them which could set them apart from others. They know that a Muslim is circumcised, considers it necessary to eat beef as if it is part of his religion and that he is inclined to be short tempered. The other sign of a Muslim

is that he is offended by the playing of music in front of a mosque. We have not tried to explain the 'azan' which is pronounced five times a day (at some places through loud-speakers). Our compariots are also responsible for this lack of knowledge and hateful attitude (which is dangerous for the country). Their attitude of superiority is partly responsible for this neglect. The curriculum, the political system, the communal leaders and the elections have also contributed a lot to the present estranged relations among different sections of the population. I am addressing you and I would like to concentrate on our own short-comings at the moment. We did not present before our countrymen the true Islamic way of life which would have attracted them and made them curious about Islam-the fountainhead of peaceful social revolution. It would have at least created a desire to study, think and enquire about it in them.

The process of bringing them closer can be achieved without sacrificing our principles, character, traditions and with no twinge of conscience. It requires exemplary conduct, good morals, spirit of sacrifice, patriotism, cordial relations and participation in social and such other works, and where necessary to provide guidance and make sincere attempts to save the country from impending moral chaos. It is easier for the 'ummat' which neither consider the life of the world to be final nor the fulfilment of personal interests to be the sole aim of life. It has, inspite of all its present weaknesses, divine teachings, the legacy of the prophets (peace be on them all) and traces of faith (iman).

It is clear as day and it does not require any extra intelligence that inspite of institutions of higher education, scholarly researches, presence of very intelligent and pious persons if the majority

community is unaware of the teachings of Islam-indeed disgustful and scared - then a tide of communal frenzy, a storm of hate and a fit of hysteria can change the whole scene in a few hours and destroy the achievements of years in a few minutes. The communal riots at some places have proved this. That is why we have to provide a 'safeguard' strong enough to protect all the religious and educational institutions, libraries, mosques and schools; as well as our honour and identity : It is that the people around us should be acquainted and familiarised with the fundamental principles of Islam; they should consider all these properties as precious national assets and a trust and recognise the usefulness and intrinsic value of the 'millat' in their midst.

Then it is necessary that there should be normal and peaceful conditions for continuance of all these efforts unhampered and to convey our thoughts to others. The other people should also be in a mood to hear and think over them patiently. If there is a thunder-storm, lightning or heavy rains it can disturb any meeting or social gathering. If a snake or a rabid dog appears at a meeting where a fascinating speaker (may be Sehban of his time) is delivering a speech the audience would disperse helter skelter and they would not like to gather again despite best efforts of the organisers. Then how a discredited minority can survive and continue its long term programmes in disturbed conditions ?

The Need for Critical Review :

It is not enough for others to be acquainted with Islam. It is necessary for the Muslims to be well aware of the conditions obtaining in the country and their pulls and pressures and be vigilant about them. Their link with the society should not be cut off.

We know from history that when the Muslims did everything they could for the country but were unmindful of the harsh realities of life; did not try to discharge their responsibility of guidance (enjoin the right and forbid the wrong), they were ousted from their hearths and homes. If the Muslims shut their eyes to the changing conditions, laws, educational system, language, script and the propaganda which is being dinned into their ears through all available media then far from providing guidance to others, their own survival as a community would become doubtful and their future generations would be exposed to mental confusion and prove an easy prey for apostasy.

Lastly, the only way for the Muslims, to live in this country with respect is that they should prove their usefulness, fill the gap of moral leadership when moral degeneration has reached a point where the very existence of the nation appears to be in jeopardy. Because no minority community can live with respect and in peace in any country without proving its utility and indispensibility through selfless service, guidance and preaching. Dr. Iqbal has rightly said :

> "Life is a struggle, not a privilege".

Furthermore the following edict of the glorious Qur'an stands for all times :

> "Then, as for the foam, it passeth away as scum upon the banks, while, as for that which is of use to mankind, it remaineth in the earth. Thus Allah coineth the similitudes".

Surah ar-R'ad : 17

Acknowlegment

Kindly post it to :

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